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TAGS: PHUM PREL PGOV UG SU

SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA: GOVERNMENT VIEWS ON PROGRESS AT JUBA; REPORTED LRA ATTACKS

Classified By: P/E Chief Kathleen FitzGibbon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).).

¶1. (C) Summary. The Government of Uganda appears to be taking steps to increase pressure on the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Southern Sudan mediator, Riek Machar. The GOU's lead negotiator, Minister of Internal Affairs Ruhakana Rugunda informed donors on February 13 that the GOU would not renew the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CHA) when it expires on February 29 because it expected a permanent agreement on a cease-fire. Meanwhile, exaggerated Ugandan press reports blamed the LRA for several attacks in southern Sudan and alleged that the LRA was moving into Central African Republic. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On February 13, the Government of Uganda negotiating team, led by Minister of Internal Affairs Ruhakana Rugunda and Minister of State for International Affairs Henry Okello Oryem told donors that definite progress was being made at the Juba peace talks. Rugunda stated that the GOU would not extend the Cessation of Hostilities after February 29, saying that there should be a cease-fire signed before then. He explained that a final peace agreement probably would not be signed on February 29, but expected that the one could be reached "around that date" or that at least, substantial progress made. Rugunda and Oryem advised that the cease-fire monitoring team would need to be "stronger and better" than the existing Cessation of Hostilities Monitoring Team (CHMT).

¶3. (C) The GOU was angered earlier in the week when the Government of Southern Sudan mediator, Riek Machar, announced the talks would resume on February 13 without consulting the GOU. Oryem told P/E Chief on February 12 that the GOU felt "jerked around" by the mediator and the LRA with frequent accommodation of the LRA delegation. Rugunda and Oryem initially said the GOU would not return to Juba until February 22, but they have since changed position and promised to return on February 18. The LRA is traveling to Rikwangba on February 16 and 17 to share with Kony the negotiated sections of the agreement, including the Accountability and Reconciliation mechanism, which is the heart of a peace deal. Rugunda has warned the LRA delegation not to allow internal divisions and ethnic rivalries on the team to undermine the negotiations. He was referring to the dismissal/resignation of Crispus Ayena, a lawyer on the LRA team, and reports that the ethnic Acholi and Langi members of the team were at odds.

¶4. (SBU) Ugandan journalists are running with exaggerated reports of LRA incidents in southern Sudan or wrongly attributing them to the LRA, without investigation, such as the incident at Kajo-Keiji. Danish Refugee Council and U.N. Security officials reported an attack near Kajo-Keiji that killed 36 on February 4. The SPLA said that only 4 people were killed. Local Ugandan journalists picked up AFP

reporting on the same attack that claimed that 136 people had been killed in a raid conducted by 300 LRA. Ugandan military officials privately dismissed the AFP account, which would have meant virtually all of the LRA's fighting force would have been involved in the attacks. LRA defectors also questioned the credibility of the AFP report, saying that an LRA movement in that area would not involve 300 individuals.

¶ 15. (C) Other incidents, including a report of 800 suspected LRA near Nabiapai, also appear exaggerated, if not highly probable. Two road ambushes on February 10 have been attributed to the LRA. Ugandan military spokesman Paddy Ankunda, who was a member of the Juba peace delegation in 2006, said that only one of the attacks might have been LRA. He said the Ugandan military could not substantiate the report that 400 LRA were moving to the Central African Republic. Ankunda also noted that the information came from a single source. MONUC is skeptical of this report, citing the lack of other indicators from observers in the region.

¶ 16. (C) Comment: The GOU continues to negotiate at Juba with the objective of getting a deal on paper. The GOU is skeptical, however, of the LRA delegation's ability to convince Joseph Kony to accept and implement an agreement. Inaccurate press reporting and potential misinformation about security incidents attributed to the LRA has the potential to complicate the Juba talks. Some of the attacks, similar to the slew of security incidents attributed to the LRA from December 2006 to January 2007, could be perpetrated by any number of armed individuals and groups in the region.

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